

Washington, DC - A new internal Defense Department document recently acquired by the office of Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) shows that plans for a replacement presidential helicopter program that the Pentagon is seeking would yield aircraft that have nearly identical capabilities as the recently cancelled VH-71 presidential helicopter replacement program, but cost three times as much and take 12 years longer to deliver. Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today said the new internal documents make it clear that Congress should reverse the decision to cut the VH-71 program in order to save taxpayers \$7-14 billion in extra costs and quickly provide a new fleet of helicopters to the White House. The fleet currently being used was designed in the 1950's and constructed in the 1970's and is at the end of its useful life, which presents serious safety and costly maintenance concerns.

Hinchey helped secure House passage of \$485.2 million in the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill to continue funding the development of the VH-71A Increment 1 presidential helicopter. The funding issue is set to come to the forefront as early as next week when House and Senate defense leaders, including Hinchey, meet to reconcile differences between the House and Senate appropriations bills. The Senate did not include funding for the continuation of the VH-71A Increment 1 helicopter in its version of the bill. Hinchey is pressing Senate defense leaders to include the House level of funding for the helicopter project that he helped secure.

"It could not be any clearer that continuing the development of the VH-71 program is in the best interests of taxpayers' wallets and the safety and security of the president," Hinchey said. "The Pentagon is playing a shell game by first saying that the VH-71 Increment 1 helicopter doesn't meet the requirements set by the original program and then turning around and drafting a set of new requirements for a future helicopter project that can already be met by the VH-71A program it's seeking to quash. The Pentagon's plan is beyond illogical. It delays the delivery of a new presidential helicopter fleet until 2024 and wastes as much as \$15 billion in taxpayer money on the construction of a new presidential program that will be nearly identical to the VH-71A program that's been in development for more than four years and is close to delivering a set of new helicopters to the White House."

The revelation that the Pentagon is seeking a new presidential helicopter fleet, known as the VXX, that is nearly identical to what's already been produced by Lockheed Martin for the VH-71 project comes from the Initial Capability Document (ICD), which was acquired by Hinchey's office and the Congressional Research Service (CRS). When the Pentagon called for the termination of the VH-71 program in April, it acknowledged that a new helicopter fleet was still needed, which led to the drafting of a set of initial requirements for a new presidential helicopter program. Those requirements in the form of the ICD make it clear that what the Pentagon is

calling for is largely already being accomplished by the VH-71 program, which before being put on hold earlier this year had produced nine helicopters that have already undergone more than 800 hours of test flights.

The ICD, which was approved by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), endorses the same fundamental Joint Capability Areas and Required Capabilities as those in place for the VH-71 [Sections 2 and 3]. The ICD also identifies essentially the same significant Capability Gaps in the current in-service aircraft that the original program identified and led to the choice of the VH-71 program. These include survivability features, passenger payload, one engine inoperable performance, security, communications, and several others [Section 4]. All of these capability gaps are successfully mitigated by the VH-71A Increment 1 helicopter. The VH-71A Increment 1 aircraft are capable of meeting and exceeding the Capability Metrics outlined in Section 4.5, which include the top priorities of 14 passengers, protection, survivability, the ability to land safely with one engine inoperative, range, and airspeed amongst others.

The ICD states that the desired date for a new presidential helicopter program to reach Initial Operating Capability (IOC) would be 2017 when the fleet currently being used by the White House reaches the end of its service life. However, previously released Navy documents estimate that were the Pentagon to start the presidential helicopter replacement program over from scratch it would not reach IOC until 2024. That seven year gap between what the Navy wants for a presidential helicopter start date and what the Navy could actually get from a newly bid program creates a significant problem. It would force the Navy to perform another Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) on the current in-service fleet in order to keep it operating for another seven years while the Pentagon waits for the delivery of the new helicopters. That life extension would cost an additional \$1.2 billion and would unnecessarily add a level of high operational risk and uncertainty, which likely factored into the ICD's desired IOC date of 2017. All of this could be avoided if the VH-71 program continues.

Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, has been working tirelessly to save the VH-71 presidential helicopter program while also refuting false claims about the cost of the presidential helicopter. The Pentagon has called for the current Lockheed Martin program to be scratched because of budget concerns and for a new program to be bid, which Hinchey has repeatedly noted would be far more costly than continuing the project that is already well underway. According to CRS, another set of internal Navy documents released earlier this year show that the new presidential helicopter program the Pentagon is calling for would cost \$15-22 billion when factoring in the \$4 billion that would have been wasted on the canceled VH-71 program and the \$1.2 billion for the SLEP.

Upon learning earlier this year of the administration's plans to propose canceling the VH-71 program, Hinchey, Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY), and several of their House colleagues offered a proposal to President Obama that involved expanding Increment 1 of the helicopter project in lieu of moving onto Increment 2 -- the more costly and technically sophisticated phase of the project. By expanding the number of Increment 1 helicopters, it's estimated that the Navy could purchase a full fleet of 23 Increment 1 helicopters on-time and within the original budget plan. If Congress doesn't provide funding to continue the VH-71 program then none of the helicopters that have already been constructed could be used, which would be a significant waste of taxpayer money.

Hinchey worked closely with his colleagues in the House, particularly House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Chairman John Murtha (D-PA), to have funding included in the fiscal year 2010 spending bill that would effectively implement the proposed plan to expand Increment 1. The \$485.2 million in the House version of the defense bill would continue the development of Increment 1 and put the government on a path to procure a full fleet of Increment 1 helicopters within the original budget requirements of the program, which is far less than the \$15-22 billion that the Pentagon's proposed plan would cost.

"Unlike other defense projects that have received a lot of attention, the presidential helicopter replacement program is a project that Congress and the administration both acknowledge needs to move forward. The question is simply about what the best way is to go about replacing the severely outdated presidential helicopter fleet currently used by the president. When all the facts are laid out on the table, including the Pentagon's own documents, there is no doubt that the continuation of the VH-71 program is the way to go."

As part of his effort to demonstrate to his colleagues, as well as senior Navy and White House officials, Hinchey has repeatedly highlighted the dramatic need for a new presidential helicopter fleet. The current fleet of helicopters, which is being stripped down to reduce weight due to safety concerns, has technology that is more than a half century old and was constructed in the 1970's. It also lacks the modern communications equipment needed for the president to securely communicate with senior staff and administration officials on the ground. Further, the current fleet of helicopters has only 10 seats. Between the first family and a crew of five that includes Secret Service agents, there is no room on the fleet currently being used for senior staff to travel with the president, which is critical in coordinating information and instructions during national emergencies. Lockheed Martin's Increment 1 version of the new helicopter can seat 14 passengers, which would enable senior White House staff members to travel with the president and his family.

